

PERSONAL STATEMENT

December 19, 2025

Honorable Judge Jeffrey S. White

United States District Court

1301 Clay Street, Courtroom 5 – Second Floor

Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Honorable Judge White,

I come before you today not seeking excuses, but to present the full truth of who I am, the pain, the failures, the service, and the love that have defined me. This is the hardest letter I have ever written, because it forces me to face my darkest mistakes and the wreckage they have caused to my life and the people I love most. But I owe that honesty to the Court, my children, my supporters, and to myself.

I am 38 years old, divorced after nearly 17 years of a relationship and 14 years of marriage. I am the proudest father of two children, Ryder (13) and Paige (10). They are not just my children, they are my purpose, my reason for enduring everything I have endured. Every decision I make today in is filtered through the lens of being their father. And yet, because of my choices, they have been forced to see things no child should ever see. Watching their father dragged from our home in handcuffs, belly chains, and shackles, is something they will live with forever. Their classmates now whispering cruel rumors about me, and ultimately their safe world shattered in ways I can never undo.

My story begins in hardship. I was born into chaos, poverty, and abuse. My father spent most of my life behind bars at San Quentin and other prison's before dying in a car crash in 2016. My mother battled severe addiction and left my life before it had even started, always choosing addiction over her own children. My maternal grandmother on my mother's side hated me from birth, and my reward was with intense physical beatings and constant mental abuse. For long stretches, I was homeless, living in cheap motels or wherever we could find shelter, and when we did it was rat and roach infested. I witnessed violence so often that it became normal, watching my half-brother's father beating my mother into a bloody mess before sharing that violence with my sister and I next. There was never a stable home, no guidance, and no one anyone to teach me the most basic lessons about love or safety. There were days when I experienced such intense hunger that stealing food from the local convenient store was the only guarantee I would be able to eat. I sustained horrific sexual abuse, and experienced things before the age of 9 that most will never endure.

Even in the chaos, I made myself a promise: I would not become what I was born into. I would not allow addiction or crime to define me. I would find another way. If not for my maternal grandmother on my father's side rescuing me from that life, I likely would have failed at that dream, because I would not have survived. This grandmother, June, was different. At sixty-six years old, she gave up her retirement to take in a broken child. She showed me love, and for the

first time in my life, I felt safe. It was not easy. I suffered from night terrors and bed-wetting, and she would find me hiding in the closet in the middle of the night, in tears. Nearly thirty years later, I still experience some of those nightmares, but I will forever be grateful for the life I was ultimately given.

To continue building a better life, I chose service. I enlisted in the United States Army and threw myself into every challenge, determined to prove I could be more than my upbringing or my family's reputation. I completed Airborne School, Air Assault School, and numerous other rigorous programs while serving under the special operations command. I earned promotions and commendations and, for the first time in my life, found a true sense of purpose. I belonged somewhere, and I loved it so much that I was willing to give my life for it.

My Army service took a physical toll, but I had no intention of leaving. That changed with the birth of my son, when I realized I needed to be a better provider and, more importantly, a present father. Life was difficult. My ex-wife, our newborn son, and I were crammed into a 580-square-foot condominium, and I struggled financially to make ends meet. Embarrassingly, I set my pride aside and applied for financial assistance. With a shattered ego and a deep sense of failure, that period did not last long. I eventually secured a great job at Union Pacific Railroad as a conductor and remote engineer. The income was phenomenal, allowing us to move out of that tiny condominium and into our first home. While that was great, I lacked the sense of purpose I had known in the military.

That void led me to law enforcement; another dream I had carried since childhood. I knew leaving a strong career at Union Pacific meant a massive pay cut and the risk of failure, but I took that risk anyway. I entered the police academy determined to excel, and I did. I graduated first in my class, earning the top academics, top report writing, and top overall recruit awards. I was also honored to serve as the class leader, representing my peers and the academy. Wearing the badge was more than a career to me; it was a calling.

I served as a deputy and later as a police officer, working on the Gang Unit, mentoring new hires as a Field Training Officer, guiding hundreds of academy recruits as a Recruit Training Officer, along with teaching as a defensive tactics' instructor, active shooter instructor, academy instructor, and much more. When working patrol, I worked to give my community the fairness and protection I never had as a child. While I know my actions in this case violated the oath I swore, I hope Your Honor can recognize the difference between my mistakes and the crimes of others. I ask that you see that I never violated the badge while on duty, nor did I ever betray the people of the community I protected or even arrested. I did not act with malicious intent, though I fully understand that I still broke the law during my time of service.

That service came with scars. I witnessed tragedies most people will never see, dead children lost to violence, families torn apart by accidents, scenes so horrific they etched themselves into my memory. I woke at night drenched in sweat, haunted by nightmares of the lives I couldn't save. One night, my ex-wife awoke to me performing CPR on a pillow while sobbing, reliving the moment I failed to save a two-year-old girl who drowned. Those memories have never left me.

My body paid the price as well. I suffered multiple spinal injuries, underwent a cervical fusion, and endured a failed lumbar laminectomy that now requires a fusion, along with yet another fusion to higher levels of my cervical spine to come. All of it left me living with chronic pain, high blood pressure, and severe PTSD. Still, I kept pushing forward until after my first cervical spine fusion, when my surgeon told me I would never wear the badge again. In that moment, it felt like my identity, the very thing I had fought to build from nothing, was suddenly ripped away.

I wish I could say I handled that loss with grace. I did not. I continued to use anabolic steroids to manage my recovery and cling to the strength I felt slipping away. They had helped after my first spine injury in 2017, so I relied on them again, hoping I could somehow prove the doctors wrong. I shared them with a small circle of people, never as a business, never to solicit or exploit, but regardless always illegally. I often advised others not to use them, recommending physician-guided therapy instead. But the law is clear, and I broke it.

I also created a fake rental agreement and altered a document related to a home loan. While the income I reported was accurate, and the bank suffered no loss, I falsified paperwork. I was told that rental agreements like this were commonly used and not a big deal. Since I wasn't lying about my income, I convinced myself I was merely sidestepping bureaucracy. But that was wrong. No matter the explanation, it was dishonest, and I accept full responsibility.

The consequences came swiftly and brutally. On two separate occasions, first in March 2022, just three weeks after officially being deemed I would never be a cop again, and then again in August 2023, my home(s) were raided by FBI SWAT teams.

Although both raids disrupted my life, the August raid is the day that broke me. Roughly one month after finding out that my wife was having an affair, while making breakfast for my children, and getting them ready for school when the sound of flashbangs and grinding metal tore through the house. Armored vehicles in the yard. Heavily armed men storming my front door as I stepped outside. My children stood frozen as they peeked through the window to watch their father being dragged out in belly chains and ankle shackles, paraded in front of neighbors, their classmates, and their teachers who lived on our street.

Since that day, my children's world has changed. My daughter struggles to sleep alone, often finding her way to my room at night. My son has been mocked at school, with classmates referring to his dad as "Pablo Escobar." Birthday parties went unfilled. Sleepovers stopped. Invitations vanished. My children, who once carried pride in their father's service, now carry shame because of my mistakes. The sense of security I never had as a child, but the one I worked so hard to provide them, was suddenly gone.

I have lost my career. I lost my medical retirement, which had been my primary source of income for injuries that continue to haunt me daily. I lost my reputation. I lost my marriage of fourteen years. My hard earned savings, gone. The life I fought to build from nothing has crumbled. I have told myself, "Well, at least it can't get any worse," only to continue proving that statement wrong. Regardless, I have not surrendered. Even in the wreckage, I have fought to keep moving forward.

Since this began, I have completed my bachelor's degree in psychology, graduating cum laude and becoming the first in my family to earn a college degree. I continue to pursue my master's degree, maintaining a 4.0 GPA, recently earning placement on the President's List, with graduation scheduled for March 2026 with summa cum laude. I have even set my sights on a PhD. I volunteered by coaching youth football, investing in kids who reminded me of myself, children searching for guidance, belonging, and discipline. I pursued aviation flight school and excelled, earning one of only twelve Student of the Month spots out of approximately one hundred forty-five students.

Yet with looming felony convictions and the stain they carry, I know I will likely never earn a reputable source of income again. I will never be a pilot. Even with a PhD, I will never practice psychology due to moral and ethics board restrictions. I know much of this work will ultimately be a complete loss in terms of my personal success, but every step has been an effort to show my children that when you fall, you get back up. Losing these opportunities has been devastating, but the loss that haunts me most is the day I was asked to step down from coaching my son's football team because of my arrest. My son, and the entire team, was confused and let down. Arguably, it was one of the deepest defeats I have ever felt.

Clearly, this has not been easy. There are nights I sit alone, staring into the darkness, wondering if my children would be better off without me. Nights when the thought of ending it all whispers louder than reason. But every time, I pull myself back with the same images: Ryder searching the stands for me after scoring a touchdown or making a basket; Paige calling me at 2 a.m. from her mother's house after a nightmare, knowing that only Daddy can make her feel safe. They still need me, more than Your Honor may ever know, and that is enough to keep me going.

I share fifty-fifty custody, yet even that never feels like enough. At her mother's, my daughter cries at night, texting message after message about how much she needs me. My son looks forward getting back "home" as he calls it to train with me, chasing his athletic goals, or battling me in our nightly ping-pong matches. Their homework, projects, and academic advancements only occur with me, and there is documented proof of this. I am as involved a father as a man can be, and during these critically developmental years, they need their dad more than ever.

Amid all of this, I have been blessed with a relationship that has provided some stability, healing, and genuine love to my life. Amanda, a former police officer who medically retired, now works in radiology at Cook Children's Hospital, continuing her commitment to helping others. Together, we have begun to build something rooted in trust, respect, and compassion. She treats my children as if they were her own, showing them daily what healthy love looks like. We have traveled together as a family, created meaningful memories, and worked tirelessly to build a life that feels safe and whole in the middle of this darkness we have been living in.

At times, I find myself mentally drifting from this case, allowing myself to feel hope for the future, but that future is fragile. This sentencing has the power to take all of this away. I would never ask someone with Amanda's potential to put her life on hold for me any longer than she already has. The thought of her suffering because of my actions weighs heavily on me. She

would not only be losing me; she would also be losing Ryder and Paige, and they would be losing her as well.

While my relationship with my ex-wife is strained, we co-parent respectfully. Prison would shatter even that fragile stability. My children would likely be unable to visit or contact me, and they would be cut off from Amanda as well. Prison could disrupt my disabled veteran benefits, which includes my children's health coverage, and is the main source of income I currently have. It is not much, but it allows my family and I to survive financially, although most months it still is not enough. It can disrupt my workers compensation claim and prevent me from receiving the proper treatment for my spine injuries which I desperately require. This sentence has the potential to completely tear apart a family that is already fighting to maintain some sense of normalcy, but I do acknowledge that it is my own actions which landed me in this position.

Your Honor, I do not ask to be excused. I broke the law. I must face consequences, and I can assure you that I have been, and will continue to for the remainder of my life. What I ask for is mercy, not for myself alone, but for my children. Mercy that allows me to be present in their lives. Mercy that recognizes the difference between a violent predator who poses a threat to society, and a broken man who found himself in a position where he made illegal choices but is determined to make amends.

I am not beyond redemption. I am not defined only by my worst mistakes. I am also the boy who survived when survival seemed impossible, the soldier who served his country, the officer who protected his community, and the father who still fights every day to be worthy of his children's love.

Thank you, Your Honor, for reading these words. I stand before you humbled, broken, but determined. Whatever sentence you impose, I will accept. All I ask is the opportunity to keep fighting, to be a father, to make amends, and to prove that my story does not have to end in failure.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel J Harris", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel J Harris